

it harms those who are most vulnerable in order to benefit the rich and a handful of special interests.

For these reasons, I cannot support the budget reconciliation spending bill and will vote against it.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, Earlier today, an amendment I have worked closely with Senator DODD from Connecticut on was passed as part of the budget reconciliation package. The amendment is based on legislation we introduced which would provide a new, one-time screening benefit for abdominal aortic aneurysms, AAAs, under Medicare for certain, eligible beneficiaries.

I am pleased this amendment was accepted, and I appreciate the hard work from Senator DODD in helping get this amendment passed. I hope that we can continue working to ensure that this provision is included in the final reconciliation package.

AAAs occur when there is a weakening of the walls of the aorta, the body's largest blood vessel. The artery begins to bulge and can lead to a rupture and often severe internal bleeding. In cases where an artery ruptures, the survival rate is less than 15 percent, and approximately 15,000 people die from ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysms each year.

When detected before rupturing, AAAs are treatable and curable in 95 percent of cases. Nearly all AAAs can be detected through an inexpensive ultrasound screening. Once detected, a physician can monitor small aortic aneurysms and begin treating the risk factors, such as high blood pressure and smoking. Large or rapidly growing aneurysms are often treated using either an open surgical procedure or a less invasive stent graft, both of which serve to repair the artery.

It is estimated that between 5 to 7 percent of adults of the age of 60 have AAAs.

Our amendment targets AAA screenings to Medicare beneficiaries with a family history and those who exhibit risk factors recommended for screening by the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force, specifically men who smoke. The amendment also limits screening to those eligible beneficiaries who participate in the Welcome to Medicare Physical.

This amendment could save thousands of lives each year, and I am pleased we were able to include it in this package.

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I am in reluctant but adamant opposition to the reconciliation bill before us. I say reluctant, because I am glad to see the Senate using the reconciliation procedure for the purposes for which it was intended: making difficult choices to reduce spending. And reluctant because some of the policy changes incorporated in this bill are necessary and worthy of the Senate's support.

One such provision relates to extension of the Milk Income Lost Contract, MILC, program. MILC, which expired

at the end of the last fiscal year, provides counter-cyclical support for the nation's dairy sector. It is targeted. It is fair. It is essential. Moreover, it enjoys the President's support. It makes sense as part of the balanced Agriculture package in this bill.

But my opposition to the entire package is adamant because this bill is just one piece of a fiscally and morally bankrupt budget. Though this bill asks for sacrifices from seniors, students, farmers and working families, the budget of which it is part will add over \$30 billion to the deficit over the next 5 years. Though this bill makes real cuts in Medicaid, Medicare, aid to farmers and funding for conservation programs across the country, the budget of which it is part will add \$3 trillion to the national debt by 2010.

If this bill was what many on the floor have argued—a carefully crafted compromise to cut \$39 billion from our growing federal deficit, I would have to think hard before opposing it. But the budget calls for today's bill to be followed with \$70 billion tax cut, the bulk of which will go to those with more than \$1 million in annual income.

I am willing to make the hard choices to bring our budget deficit down. I am not willing to support taking needed services away from those that need them the most—and use those cuts as a fig leaf to hide tax breaks for those who need them the least.

Our budget is the most basic expression of what we stand for as a government. Is this budget really what we want to vote to say? That we are the sort of country that threatens our own economic stability by piling deficit upon deficit? That we show our fiscal toughness by chopping aid to those in need? That we show our compassion only to those whose biggest problem is finding a really good tax shelter for their growing capital gains?

Make no mistake, this bill is the first piece of the budget that says just that, and for that reason alone, it deserves our solid opposition. But beyond that, there are individual provisions in this bill to which I take exception. One is the use of this bill's extraordinary fast track procedures to accomplish what big Oil's proponents have not been able to get through the Senate in the past: opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling.

I have long supported protecting this valuable and fragile natural wonder, and I think it is unfortunate that we are drilling in this wilderness for a relatively small payback. Those on the other side of this issue who use the current high price of oil to justify the violation of this pristine area are short sighted. According to the Department of Energy's own analysis the oil from the refuge will only lower the price of a barrel of oil by one penny. In addition, this oil will not come on line for almost a decade. Instead of threatening our natural heritage, I believe we should be looking instead at encour-

aging conservation efforts, and taking a careful look at high oil company profits. We do need to act to lower our dependency on foreign oil, but we cannot drill our way out of dependency.

I'm also particularly disappointed that the bill we are considering today contains harmful program cuts that would fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable in our society. This legislation cuts funding for health care provided through the Medicaid program, which provides health insurance to poor children, pregnant women, and elderly. My Republican colleagues argue that we must cut waste and fraud in Medicaid and I am not opposed to that. However, I do not agree with the arbitrary way they have gone about cutting funding from this critical safety net program—without which millions of Americans would be uninsured—and using that money to pay for tax cuts for people with high incomes. I'm also concerned about the increased burden this bill places on seniors through additional cuts in the Medicare program and an increase in Medicare Part B premiums. I hope my colleagues will support several of the amendments offered today to help minimize the impact these cuts could have on our Nation's elderly.

I urge my colleagues to reject this bill—and the irresponsible and cruel budget of which it is part.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today truly alarmed about the administration's fiscal irresponsibility. In the past 5 years, the President's policies have turned record surpluses into record deficits. Just a few weeks ago, the Department of Treasury announced that this year's budget deficit is the third largest in history at \$319 billion.

But, that is not where the bad story ends.

By sleight of hand, the administration continues to use other resources to finance debt, including foreign lenders and Social Security. The real deficit is a staggering \$551 billion, 4.5 percent of GDP.

Administration officials are nonchalant about the fiscal disarray.

I am deeply worried. We all should be.

On October 18, the national debt passed the \$8 trillion mark. Even more disturbing, the national debt is being financed by Chinese, Japanese, and other overseas lenders. To put this into perspective, in absolute dollars, the country is borrowing more than ever in its history, close to \$2 trillion from foreign nations. We owe over \$680 billion to Japan, \$390 billion to the European Union, \$240 billion to China, and \$57 billion to OPEC nations, to name a few.

It is beyond me how this administration can turn a blind eye to these numbers, or how Congress can approve legislation that exacerbates these fiscal problems.

Instead of facing up to the fiscal truth, President Bush ignores the mountain of debt that will burden generations to come.